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ABSTRACT

Military cutbacks by the Department of Defense will cause thousands of enlisted personnel and civilian workers in defense industries to lose their jobs and look toward other employment opportunities. To help ease this conversion for some displaced employees, the Department of Defense is sponsoring a program to help former servicepeople earn certification as teachers and teacher aides. The program, called "Troops to Teachers," provides financial assistance to both former military workers and qualified school districts, enabling defense personnel to obtain licensure and employment. The purpose of this bulletin is to present teacher educators with details of the alternative teacher education program, as well as acquaint them with the particular requirements of Troops to Teachers' students. The following aspects of the program are outlined: legislative history; structure (stipends and placement grants); and regulations and operating procedures (enrollment and placement). It is noted that participants are required to work in schools receiving federal grants under the Chapter 1 program. To adequately prepare participants for their prospective employment, schools of education may wish to emphasize concepts of best practice and pedagogy in compensatory education. (LL)

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

TROOPS to TEACHERS: Guidelines for Teacher Educators

BY

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Introduction

With the end of the Cold War, the Department of Defense faces an immense task of reducing America's armed forces. Military cutbacks will cause thousands of enlisted personnel and civilian workers in defense industries to lose their jobs, and look toward other employment opportunities.

To ease this conversion for some displaced employees, the Department of Defense is sponsoring a program to help former servicepeople earn certification as teachers and teacher aides. The program, called "Troops to Teachers," provides financial assistance to both former military workers and qualified school districts, enabling defense personnel to obtain licensure and employment.

During 1994, the Troops to Teachers program will offer stipends up to $5,000 to approximately 5,000 individuals. Obviously, this program will enable many people with military experience and training to change their career paths and enroll in teacher education programs around the country. This bulletin describes the details of this program to acquaint teacher educators with the particular requirements of Troops to Teachers students.

Background

The Troops to Teachers program was created by Congress in 1992 by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1993 (P.L. 102-484). Title XLIV, Subtitle D of this law directs the Secretary of Defense to provide assistance to

> *eligible members of the armed forces after their separation from active duty to obtain (A) certification or licensure as elementary or secondary school teachers or (B) the credentials necessary to serve as teachers' aides; and...facilitate the employment of such members by local educational agencies...experiencing a shortage of teachers or teachers' aides.*

The legislation directed the Secretary of Defense to survey states and identify those with alternative certification and licensure for teachers, particularly ones which would grant credit for military service. The survey would also ask states to indicate

> *local education agencies that (A) are receiving grants under chapter 1 of title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965...and (B) are also experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers, in particular a shortage of science, mathematics, or engineering teachers;... and a shortage of teachers' aides.*

In FY 1993, Troops to Teachers was appropriated $65 million in federal funds to conduct these activities over a two-year period. The program was amended somewhat by the FY 1994 Defense authorization law (P.L. 103-160, signed in November 1993), by allowing non-degreed military personnel to earn bachelor's degrees within five years of discharge and thus qualify for future participation in Troops to Teachers. Though Troops to Teachers is authorized until October 1, 1997, the program can select participants only when sufficient appropriations are available. At present, funding for the program in FY 1995 and subsequent years is uncertain.

Program Structure

The Troops to Teachers program involves two aspects: stipends to former servicepeople to obtain certification and grants to qualified school districts to accommodate employment of these individuals.

—*Stipends*

Service personnel with six or more years of continuous active duty may apply for a one-time stipend of $5,000 (or the total costs of their preparation as teachers or teacher aides, up to $5,000). Priority may be given to service personnel with experience in science, mathematics, or engineering who agree to seek teaching positions in these high-demand fields. Displaced civilian employees in the Departments of Defense and Energy, and scientists and engineers from defense contractors may qualify for stipends as well. Personnel interested in teacher certification stipends must possess at least a bachelor's degree at the time of application; those seeking teacher aide preparation must hold an associate's degree or higher.

All participants will be required to agree to accept full-time employment with an eligible school district for five consecutive school years. Participants who fail to obtain appropriate credentials as teachers or teacher aides within two years, or do not complete their five-year employment terms with schools, will be required to reimburse a portion of their stipend to the Secretary of Defense.

—*Placement Grants*

Once the participants in Troops to Teachers earn their certification as teachers or qualify as teacher aides, the Department of Defense will provide grants to eligible schools to encourage employment of these individuals. The Troops to Teachers program aims to place its completers in schools receiving federal grants for concentrations of disadvantaged students, and experiencing shortages of qualified teachers in various subjects, particularly science and math.

The Department of Defense is authorized to confer with the Department of Education to survey states and identify local educational agencies that receive federal Chapter 1 grants and report staff shortages. Such districts may hire Troops to Teachers "graduates" but must agree to employ them in full-time positions for five consecutive school years. During this period, the Department of Defense will pay a proportion of an employee's basic salary. In the first year of employment (which should "begin the school year after obtaining the necessary credentials"), 50 percent of the employee's basic salary—up to $25,000—will be paid by Troops to Teachers. Over the following four years, the payment percentage rate and the maximum total amount decline:

Year of Employment	*Salary Proportion*	*Maximum Amount*
2nd year	40 percent	$10,000
3rd year	30 percent	$ 7,500
4th year	20 percent	$ 5,000
5th year	10 percent	$ 2,500

If a teacher or teacher aide leaves a school district before his/her term of employment is completed, the Department of Defense may require partial reimbursement of the employee's salary grant from the school district. Also, grants will not be given to schools that artificially create vacancies for Troops to Teachers participants by terminating other employees.

IMPLEMENTATION

Regulations and operating procedures for Troops to Teachers are under the authority of the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) office based in Pensacola, Florida. DANTES manages the Troops the Teachers program by selecting participants, issuing stipends and salary grants, and providing technical assistance to colleges and universities that enroll Troops to Teachers students.

—*Enrollment*

DANTES provides information about the program to servicepeople upon their separation from active duty. Interested personnel apply to DANTES for stipends within one year following their discharge, and may use the funds at any accredited institution of higher education. In 1994, DANTES plans to award 5,000 stipends. In addition to their stipends, Troops to Teachers participants may seek other forms of student assistance (such as loans or scholarships), but should consult with financial aid officers at their college or university to determine eligibility.

Participants seeking teacher licensure are encouraged to enroll in postbaccalaureate alternative certification programs, particularly those that grant credit for education and experience acquired during military service. DANTES will require institutions to verify enrollment status of Troops to Teachers students, as well as validate their costs of obtaining teacher certification. At their initial enrollment, participants will deliver a form to an institutional officer (such as a registrar or bursar,not the dean of education) to issue a letter on institutional letterhead to DANTES. The letter should state that the student is enrolled and describe the costs of his/her preparation as a teacher or teacher aide. Any subsequent changes in the student's status or tuition costs should be similarly reported to DANTES.

—*Placement*

After Troops to Teachers participants have received their credentials as teachers and teacher aides, DANTES will assist them with job placements in eligible schools. DANTES will collect information about appropriate vacancies in Chapter 1 schools and disseminate available data to job seekers. In 1994, the program expects to award

grants supporting 1,200 teacher and teacher aide positions throughout the nation.

Additional Points

The Troops to Teachers program will direct many skilled, experienced and disciplined individuals to new careers as teachers and teacher aides. As the program becomes fully operational across the nation, two related issues should be considered.
—*ESEA Reauthorization*

The Troops to Teachers program requires its participants to work in schools receiving federal grants under the Chapter 1 program. Chapter 1 provides grants for compensatory education to disadvantaged students, and is the largest component of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). This act expires in 1994 and Congress is currently considering legislation to reauthorize and restructure ESEA (and changing the name of "Chapter 1" to its original "Title I"). Congress will probably not complete its work on this large and complex measure until Summer 1994, so it is not yet clear what revisions may be made; nonetheless, any changes to Chapter 1 may have an impact on Troops to Teachers graduates employed in such schools.

Teacher education departments will not be responsible for ensuring that Troops to Teachers graduates find jobs in Chapter 1 schools; however, schools of education should be aware that employment options for Troops to Teachers participants carry this restriction. These individuals must be hired by schools receiving (not just eligible for) Chapter 1 grants, or else they "default" on their stipends and must reimburse the Department of Defense.

—*Professional Development*

Teacher educators commonly agree that classroom personnel should be specially trained to serve disadvantaged students. Teachers and teacher aides in Chapter 1 schools should be appropriately prepared to educate children in poverty. The Troops to Teachers program expects its graduates to work in Chapter 1 schools with concentrations of low-income students, but does not require participants to complete any specific courses that might better equip them to serve disadvantaged children. Furthermore, the Troops to Teachers program only provides stipends to participants to obtain licensure; once they are certified and hired by a qualified school, Troops to Teachers does not fund any subsequent professional development.

Schools of education should note that Troops to Teachers participants will spend the first five years of their careers as teachers and teacher aides in Chapter 1 schools. After these new educators are placed in the classroom, it is not apparent what type of professional development (if any) will be available to help them meet the needs of disadvantaged students. To prepare Troops to Teachers participants adequately for their propspective employment, schools of education may wish to emphasize concepts of best practice and pedagogy on compensatory education in their accelerated or alternative teacher licensure programs.

Information Notes

As Troops to Teachers student enroll in education programs, institutions of higher education and schools, departments, and colleges of teacher education may require further information about the program. **Direct all inquiries on Troops to Teachers to:**

Dr. John Gantz or Mr. Mace Henderson
DANTES
6490 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, Florida 32509
904-452-1320
904-452-1978 FAX

A directory of alternative licensure programs at AACTE member institutions is available from AACTE Publications. To order ***Alternative Paths to Teaching: A Directory of Postbaccalaureate Programs,*** call AACTE Publications at 202-293-2450.

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Additional Sources

U.S. Congress, 102nd Congress, 2nd session. *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1993*. P.L. 102-484.

U.S. Congress, 103nd Congress, 1st session. *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994*. P.L. 103-160.